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THE COMMUNIST SUBVERSIVE THREAT TO THE TREATY AREA

I. INTRODUCTION

The events of recent months reveal a continuation of modified Communist tactics in South and Southeast Asia stressing pledges of "peaceful coexistence," offers of trade and "mutually beneficial" cultural contacts, and claims of greater compatibility of aims among the Communist nations and the "neutralist" Asian states as against those of the major Western powers and the Asian states allied with them. In pursuit of current Communist objectives, the lead continues to be taken, through most of the area, by the Communist bloc nations on a government to government basis, with the local Communist parties reduced largely to secondary adjuncts.

Externally, this campaign has been marked by the abandonment or diminution of overt hostility toward the South and Southeast Asian governments by the Communist states. In the case of those Asian countries allied with the anti-Communist nations, care is now taken to distinguish between governmental leaders, who are said to be guilty of misguided collaboration with the West, and "the people," who are alleged to favor friendly peaceful relations with the Communist areas. Internally, the campaign is marked by continued subordination of tactics of armed struggle to concentration on subversive penetration and, where possible, on open political agitation.

This transformation in the character of the Communist threat has been underway since 1951, when tactics of open rebellion began to be moderated in some areas and when efforts to negotiate settlements were begun that would permit continued Communist activity as a legal "political" opposition. A parallel international trend started at about the same time with the beginnings of admission by Peiping and Moscow that

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the new Asian governments -- except those allied with the West -- were in fact independent rather than, as in previous descriptions, still captives of the "colonialists." It took form and gained substance, however, only since the end of the Indochina war in mid-1954 and the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955.

II. THE PRESENT COMMUNIST THREAT

Despite the reduction of insurgent capabilities by the action of the independent governments and the further slackening of open rebellion as a matter of Communist policy, the Communist threat to the treaty area has not diminished. The significance of subversive activity, in fact, has increased and to some extent rendered the problem of countering communism greater. For it is far more difficult to cope with a threat that is garbed in the clothing of promised friendship, aid, and political collaboration than with a threat that is naked in its challenge to constituted authority.

The new and "soft" diplomatic, political, and economic approach applied by the Communist states to the "neutralist" nations in South and Southeast Asia may, in addition, be considered as indirect efforts to subvert those nations in the area which are members of SEATO and, thus, allied in opposition to Communist expansion. The "neutralist" states, especially those on the mainland, have in large measure reacted to Communist approaches out of fear, particularly of the power of Communist China, the Communist zone of Vietnam, and the Communist networks among the overseas Chinese. These neutrals have not recognized the increased security that would accrue to them from identification with and participation in such collective security arrangements as SEATO. Committed thus to avoid possibly provocative actions that might arouse open Chinese and Vietnamese Communist hostility, these nations have been led to conclude friendship agreements (such as the multiplying

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pledges of devotion to the "five principles" of coexistence) and trade and economic arrangements with various of the Communist nations. Having chosen to rely primarily on international goodwill and on the UN system for their security, they apparently believe that pledges of peaceful coexistence provide a kind of guarantee both against Communist aggression and against internal interference through subversion.

The unreliability of these commitments by Communist countries is of course demonstrated by the continuation of subversive activity by Communist organizations in all countries of the region and by flagrant violation of Burma's borders by Chinese Communist military elements. A true assessment of the subversive danger, however, would include not only the range of Communist activity within an individual country, but also the indirect psychological impact of the behavior of neighboring states. "Neutralist" signatures to "five principles" agreements, and even their recent support of some Communist foreign policy objectives such as the admission of Communist China to the UN, do not necessarily imply any diminution of their opposition to extension of Communist influence within their own societies. There is danger, however, that such statements, and the accompanying increase in direct contact between "neutralist" leaders and the Communist countries, will be misconstrued in anti-Communist nations as indicating a real reduction in the Communist threat. Such conclusions, in turn, could induce an unwarranted relaxation in popular awareness of the need for continued precautions against overt or covert Communist aggression.

III. CURRENT COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS

While Communist pronouncements, including the decisions of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and the declarations during the September Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, make it clear that the ultimate Communist objective in the treaty area continues to be the

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establishment of Communist regimes subservient to Moscow and Peiping in every country, they also confirm earlier impressions that the goal is being pursued through somewhat altered means. In fact, the ultimate goal is partially concealed by carefully calculated interim objectives toward which current efforts are directed:

1. Dispel fear of the Communist bloc nations and promote acceptance at the Asian Communist parties as respectable national political parties ostensibly willing to "collaborate" with other political groups;
2. Exacerbate frictions and prevent the development of normal friendly ties among the independent Asian nations, using the nature of their relations with the West as the basic criterion for differentiation;
3. Promote neutralism and assist in the creation of an Asian bloc of nations independent of all Western ties.

The substitution of these interim goals for the direct pursuit of communization through open rebellion reflects a tacit admission by the Communists that the early phase of insurrection, emphasized in the period between 1946 and 1951, had failed and, at the same time, a calculation that an altered program was now better suited to the ultimate objective of securing Communist control throughout the area. Even in Vietnam, where the Communist initiative and momentum was perhaps greatest, the leaders of the world Communist movement settled in 1954 for a stabilization of the situation and the elimination of open warfare, at least in part for the sake of removing one more contradiction to the growing campaign for "peace" and "coexistence."

Wherever insurgent Communists remain active, as in Burma, Malaya, and the Philippines, their open opposition to the free governments has become an embarrassment to Moscow and Peiping in their campaign to demonstrate the essential compatibility of objectives between the Communist countries and all independent "peace-loving" nations of Asia.

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The efforts of these local parties to convert themselves into legal political organizations through agitation for "united front" governments or formation of coalition parties, at any cost short of complete liquidation of the party apparatus, provide convincing evidence of their subservience to control from Moscow and Peiping. At the same time, these tactics are further evidence of a Communist calculation that diplomatic-political persuasion and subversion from within are more likely to be successful than previous concentration on local terror and external military threats and intimidation.

The non-insurrectionary assets of the local Communist movements and the resources of the Communist bloc nations have now been blended into a coordinated campaign in pursuit of these modified goals, and together they exhibit a rather well-defined range of tactics, applied flexibly in terms of the situation prevailing in each country. Examples of virtually the entire range of tactics can be found in various parts of the treaty area.

A. By Local Parties

Political activity is directed toward 1) legalization of the party, 2) formation of inter-party alliances or "united front" elements, or 3) realization of a coalition government with Communist participation, depending on the circumstances in individual countries. The most striking recent development has been the successful campaign of the Communist-led Pathet Lao movement in Laos to reach agreement with the Royal Lao Government on the general principles of a settlement involving "reintegration" of the Communist rebels into the national community including the Royal Army and the legalization of Pathet Lao political activities. Similarly, in Cambodia, the Communist-led Pracheachon Party has sought to join Prince Sihanouk's dominant political group, the Sangkum Riast Niyum, without losing its own organizational identity -- an effort thus

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far unsuccessful. In the Philippines, the Communists appear to be concentrating most of their energies on the formation of new "front" groups and the penetration of non-Communist organizations among youth, labor, the Chinese minority, and other groups, as a means of extending their opportunities for political influence. In Pakistan, although the Communist Party continues to be outlawed, its viewpoint is expressed by extremist elements in various political organizations and by "The Pakistan Times" and "Imroze," two important journals. In Malaya, the rebel Communists, despite rejection of their earlier proposals for peaceful settlement through recognition of the Malayan Communist Party as a legal political instrument, have continued thus far to pursue a cautious policy of avoiding large-scale contact with security forces, apparently in the hope that better opportunities for a swing to political action will present themselves. And in Singapore, the Communist-led People's Action Party and those left-wing labor unions penetrated by Communists are currently acting with restraint in the face of increasingly severe government efforts to curb their influence, apparently anxious to preserve their position as accepted political organizations.

Parallels to these efforts to achieve political recognition appear in Burma and Indonesia. In Burma, despite the fact that the Communists have a parliamentary position through their control of the Burma Workers' and Peasants' Party, financially supported by the Chinese Communist embassy, the principal rebel Communist group has been agitating for a negotiated settlement that would permit it to operate as a political organization. In Indonesia, the Communist Party has carefully moderated its criticisms of the present coalition government in an obvious attempt to preserve what goodwill it can among leaders of other parties for a future day.

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In divided Vietnam, the Communists are pressing their adjustment to a long-term political effort in the wake of passage of the July date by which they had promised to reunify Vietnam. Although debarred from overt political activity in Free Vietnam, they are attempting covertly to mobilize popular support for goals attractive to all Vietnamese -- peace, reunification (without mentioning the Communist intention of controlling any unified government) and economic improvement. In this campaign, they are stressing the role of the Fatherland Front which, although actually completely controlled by the Communist Party, masquerades as a broad popular movement composed of many parties, religious groups, and cultural interests.

At the same time, the Communists wish to preserve the military cadres and subversive elements they have developed in past years. In Free Vietnam several thousand trained guerrillas are still organized though dispersed, and the government periodically discovers caches of arms presumably being held in readiness against a day when the Communists might again alter their tactics and resort to sabotage and terror or combine such disruption within Free Vietnam with a military invasion. In Laos, it remains to be seen whether the Communist Pathet Lao, despite its platitudinous expressions of solidarity with the Lao people, will permit an integration that would scatter its forces through the army and subject them to screening and reeducation by the Royal Government. About a thousand Huk guerrillas still bide their time in the mountain fastness of Luzon, and determination to preserve this military nucleus may explain intra-party differences over the surrender of Luis Taruc and his brother Peregrino's reported desire to surrender. In Malaya, Chin Peng's refusal to accept government terms for settlement of the "emergency" suggests an intention to preserve the guerrilla groups, still several thousand strong, as an instrument of pressure looking forward to the expected realization of independence in August 1957.

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Similarly in Burma, the underground Communists, though agitating for settlement of the insurrection, insist on preserving the organizational identity of the Burma Communist Party, and the party leadership, at least, has not responded to government offers of individual amnesty.

This tactic serves a number of possible purposes. So long as the rebellions continue, government energies are diverted from important tasks of reconstruction and development. Also, the Communists preserve one strong element in their bargaining position as long as they are able to threaten internal security. The activities and mere presence of local Communist military and para-military groups serves to retard the mobilization of the people's energy behind the legitimately constituted governments and causes the timid to hedge against the possibility of an eventual Communist assault. Insurrectionist elements also provide a convenient point of contact for foreign Communist agents operating clandestinely in the countries of the treaty area.

In most countries of the area, the Communists are intensifying their efforts to mobilize support through front groups representing labor, students, intellectuals, minorities, and so on, either by organizing new groups or by infiltrating those already in existence. The Vietnamese Government has recently exposed a Communist attempt to penetrate the General Confederation of Labor and despite the arrest of several suspected Communists and the seizure of documents testifying to the attempt, such efforts are likely to continue. In Singapore, the Communists continue to extend their penetration of and influence over the left-wing union groups, and their position of influence within the Chinese schools has been demonstrated in repeated disciplinary problems and artificially stimulated student demonstrations.

Although the effort is not new, the Communists are giving increasing stress to exploiting the activities of such front groups on a regional

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basis. At the Asian-African Students Conference held at Bandung in May 1956, delegates from the Philippines, Pakistan, and some other countries were successful in exposing and largely frustrating Communist efforts to seize control of the conference and to influence its deliberations and declarations. The efforts have continued and are currently marked by attempts of Communist-led or Communist-influenced unions in Indonesia, Japan, and other Far Eastern countries to press for early convening of an Asian-African labor conference. These activities reveal the failure of past attempts to mobilize effective regional front organizations under obviously Communist sponsorship, and the adoption of the new tactic of attempting to exploit the sense of regional solidarity and common interests developed at the original inter-governmental Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955.

B. By the Communist Countries

The organizational activities of Communist groups within the countries of the treaty area and the content of their propaganda are significant chiefly because of their correlation with the activities of foreign Communist nations.

Spearheaded by the Soviet Union and Communist China, the bloc countries are pushing their drive for diplomatic recognition and the expansion of political and economic relations with the countries of the area. The establishment of new formal relationships automatically adds somewhat to the prestige of the Communist nations in countries of the area, as well as increasing the influence of the local Communist Parties. Particularly in the case of relations with Communist China, the establishment of direct contact has an immediately unfortunate impact on the political attitudes of the overseas Chinese communities; it handicaps the efforts to maintain vigilance against Communist subversion among loyal leaders of the Chinese communities. Significant numbers of Chinese

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students are still returning to the mainland for middle school and university education, and although few of these students have as yet returned to the Southeast Asian countries, their potential value to the Communists as subversive agents, upon their return, is a legitimate cause of concern to all the free governments in the treaty area.

A growing number of official visits are being exchanged, and greater stress is being given to exchange of delegations representing cultural organizations, youth and sport groups, journalists, and parliamentarians.

A more recent and potent threat is the Communist emphasis on the negotiation of trade, economic aid, and technical assistance agreements with countries of the region. Appealing to some Asian leaders because of the general need for economic development and for skilled technicians and capital goods, such offers from the bloc countries have added to the total danger of Communist penetration and subversion. The Communists probably hope to:

1. Weaken friendly ties between Asian nations and those non-Asian countries that are now their principal trading partners and that now provide developmental assistance;
2. Secure, in some instances, a position so entrenched that the threat of withdrawal of aid or cancellation of trade contracts could force political concessions from the Asian nations;
3. Utilize the presence of advisory and technical missions not only to build "goodwill" for the Communist nations but also to take advantage of intelligence opportunities and eventually, in concert with diplomatic staffs, to propagandize for Communist political objectives and organize sympathizers into new economic and cultural groups susceptible to Communist influence or control;
4. Reinforce an image of the power and economic strength of the Communist nations as a means of attracting interest among Asians who aspire to rapid economic development.

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5. Facilitate and assist in directing subversive operations among the overseas Chinese and by local Communist groups.

To these ends, the Communist states appear willing to buy commodities they do not need, supply certain eye-catching goods at below-cost prices to lure Asian nations away from normal sources of supply, and ship goods and technicians badly needed at home for the sake of the political impact in the recipient countries.

The countries which have accepted these ostensibly disinterested offers of trade and aid have already begun to discover the pitfalls. Some commodities have been considerably overpriced; quality is frequently inferior; future export commitments are beginning to restrict opportunities to compete in traditional markets; and in the case of Communist China particularly, goods have frequently not been delivered on schedule. But once such commitments are undertaken, it is difficult for nations to break them when such action threatens the posture of "friendship" which they have chosen to rely on as their chief defense against Communist pressure.

The Communist bloc countries are propagandizing their "peaceful" intentions and desire for continued "relaxation of tension" as a means of lulling suspicions over the possibility of renewed aggression as well as diverting attention from the continuing pattern of subversion. By joining with each other and with susceptible "neutralist" states in an apparently unending series of declarations in support of the "five principles of coexistence" and of peace, independence, and economic progress, the Communists are trying to spread the false notion that the anti-Communist states that are unwilling to subscribe to such joint statements are opposed to these goals.

With characteristic duplicity the Communists support nationalistic aspirations wherever their expression leads to tension between independent

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nations, while blithely ignoring their own imperial system stretching from East Berlin to Pyongyang and Hanoi.

At the same time, the Communists are maintaining direct or indirect pressures which represent the threat ingredient in the carrot-and-stick technique of political persuasion. The most flagrant example is the military penetration of eastern and northern Burma by the Chinese Communists, which is hardly a demonstration of their declared willingness to settle issues by discussion and with respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of neighboring states.

The Chinese and Vietnamese Communists are also continuing their support for dissident minority elements that are operating in countries of the treaty area or that live in Communist areas but are racially akin to ethnic groups in free countries. The renegade Kachin leader Naw Seng, according to Burmese press reports, is still being harbored by the Chinese Communists and trained for possible service as the leader of a force to "liberate" parts of the Kachin State from Burmese control. The progressively tighter Communist control over such ethnic minorities as those in the "Thai Autonomous Area" and a recently created Wa "autonomous" district in Yunnan and the "Thai-Meo Autonomous Zone" in northwest Vietnam represents a threat to contiguous areas in Thailand, Burma, and Laos, as more local people trained and indoctrinated by the Chinese Communists become available for possible subversive activities in adjacent areas.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The almost exclusive concentration by the Communists on domestic political and external diplomatic and economic tactics in pursuit of their goal of expanding influence and eventually seizing control of countries throughout the treaty area has made the task of detecting and coping with subversive activity more difficult. At the same time, however, the local Communist parties also face some difficult readjustments

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wherever insurgent activity persists in apparent contradiction with proffered "friendship," "national unity," and "coexistence."

The subversive threat is currently greatest in those countries in the area which have chosen or are moving toward neutralism as a national policy, and which therefore lack the strength accruing from participation in a regional security organization.

Beyond this differentiation on the basis of policy, the threat appears greatest in the mainland countries where, by virtue of geographic contiguity to the centers of Communist power, it is easiest to direct and supply subversive groups, to apply pressure for modification of policy, and to exploit grievances of ethnic minorities or other groups within the national societies.

It is likely that the Communists will continue this broad basic pattern, adjusting specific actions to the conditions in particular countries. They will probe for weaknesses that they hope will permit progressively deeper involvement in the cultural, economic, and eventually the political life of nations in the area. This process of burrowing from within, accompanied by pressures and inducements from the bloc countries, will probably remain concentrated on those countries -- Afghanistan, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, and Cambodia -- that have shown greatest receptivity because of their policy of neutrality which stimulates a desire to "balance" their relations with the free world and the Communist bloc. However, it will not be limited to those areas. Beginning with efforts to establish informal, non-governmental contacts of a cultural and economic nature, the process has already been extended to other countries and can be expected to continue. The opposition of SEATO to the expansion of Communist influence in all forms is clearly identified in Communist propaganda as a significant barrier to achievement of their goals, and maneuvers designed to weaken ties and to create

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distrust among the member nations will continue, probably with growing intensity.

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